

IN THE CLAIMS:

(previously amended)

1. A seal assembly for sealing a toner passage in a toner hopper used in an image forming apparatus, said seal assembly comprising:

a main body portion, said main body portion including a first layer defining a first opening,

an adherent layer including a second opening in register with said first opening of said first layer, said adherent layer having a first surface and a second surface, said second surface of adherent layer is adjacent said first layer and said first surface of said adherent layer further including at least one masking region, wherein said at least one masking region is covered by at least one kiss-cut release liner; and

a tear-able layer wherein said tear-able layer is adhered to said first surface of said adherent layer except where said at least one masking region is covered by said kiss-cut release liner, thereby said at least one kiss-cut release liner is covered by said tear-able layer; and

a pull-strip is connected to said tear-able layer.

(original)

2. A seal assembly as in claim 1 wherein said adherent layer comprises an adhesive material.

(previously amended)

3. A seal assembly as in claim 1 wherein said adherent layer comprises a tape material wherein said tape material includes adhesive on two opposite surfaces.

(original)

4. A seal assembly as in claim 3 wherein said tape material includes a carrier in between two layers of glue or adhesive.

(original)

5. A seal assembly as in claim 1 wherein said adherent layer comprises a glue material.

(currently amended)

5 6. A seal assembly as in claim 1 wherein said at least one kiss-cut release liner is a precision cut that cuts fully through said kiss-cut release liner layer but not fully through said seal assembly.

(previously amended)

10 7. A seal assembly as in claim 1 wherein said pull-strip comprises a strip of tear-able material which is unitary with said tear-able layer.

(previously amended)

15 8. A seal assembly as in claim 1 wherein said pull-strip comprises a tear-guide.

(previously amended)

9. A seal assembly as in claim 1 wherein a connecting region is formed in the vicinity where said pull-strip connects to said tear-able layer; and

20 wherein a first pre-cut and a second pre-cut are proximately located in said connecting region or adjacent said connecting region, said first and second pre-cuts determining a location of an initial tear of said tear-able layer in said main body portion.

(previously amended)

25 10. A seal assembly as in claim 1

wherein said first layer has a first surface and a second surface wherein said first surface of said first layer is adjacent said second surface of said adherent layer, and

wherein said kiss-cut release liner is a portion of a first release liner layer; and

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wherein said kiss-cut release liner covers said at least one masking region and the remainder of said first release liner layer is discarded so that said tear-able layer can adhere to said first surface of said adherent layer; and

5 wherein a tape layer has a first surface and a second surface, and

wherein said first surface of said tape layer is located on said second surface of said first layer and a second release liner layer is attached to said second surface of said tape layer to protect said tape layer prior to installing said seal assembly and wherein said second
10 release liner layer
is removed prior to installing said seal assembly.

(previously amended)

11. A seal assembly as in claim 1 wherein said kiss-cut release liner includes a
15 masking portion consisting of more than one discrete region on said kiss-cut release liner wherein each said discrete region on said kiss-cut release liner covers said at least one masking region.

(previously amended)

20 12. A seal assembly as in claim 1 wherein said kiss-cut release liner includes at least one non-masking portion consisting of more than one discrete region on said kiss-cut release liner wherein each said discrete region on said kiss-cut release liner covers said at least one non-masking portion.

25 (previously amended)

13. A seal assembly as in claim 1 wherein said tear-able layer is conductive.

(previously amended)

14. A seal assembly as in claim 1 wherein said pull-strip is conductive.

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(previously amended)

15. A toner hopper used in an image forming apparatus;
wherein said toner hopper includes a reservoir and a feed roller compartment;
and

wherein said reservoir is used to store powdered toner; and

5 wherein said feed roller compartment includes a roller used to dispense toner;
and

wherein said toner hopper includes a seal assembly between said reservoir and
said feed roller compartment;

said seal assembly comprising:

10 a main body portion, said main body portion including a first layer defining a first
opening,

an adherent layer including a second opening in register with said first opening of
said first layer, said adherent layer having a first surface and a second surface, said second
15 surface of said adherent layer is adjacent said first layer and said first surface of said
adherent layer further including at least one masking region, wherein said at least one
masking region is covered by a kiss-cut release liner; and

a tear-able layer wherein said tear-able layer is adhered to said first surface of said
adherent layer except where said at least one masking region is covered by said kiss-cut
20 release liner, thereby said kiss-cut release liner is covered by said tear-able layer; and

a pull-strip is connected to said tear-able layer.

(previously amended)

16. A toner cartridge assembly used in an image forming apparatus;

25 wherein said toner cartridge assembly includes of a toner hopper and a waste toner
hopper; and

wherein said waste toner hopper includes of a photoreceptor, a cleaning blade, a charging
device for electrostatically charging said photoreceptor and a container to receive waste
toner; and

30 wherein said toner hopper includes a reservoir and a feed roller compartment; and

wherein said reservoir is used to store powdered toner; and

wherein said feed roller compartment has a roller used to dispense toner; and

wherein said toner hopper comprises a seal assembly; and
said seal assembly comprising:

5 a main body portion, said main body portion including a first layer defining a first opening,

an adherent layer including a second opening in register with said first opening of said first layer, said adherent layer having a first surface and a second surface, said second surface of said adherent layer is adjacent said first layer and said first surface of said adherent layer further including at least one masking region, wherein said at least one
10 masking region is covered by a kiss-cut release liner; and

a tear-able layer wherein said tear-able layer is adhered to said first surface of said adherent layer except where said at least one masking region is covered by said kiss-cut release liner, thereby said kiss-cut release liner is covered by said tear-able layer; and

a pull-strip is connected to said tear-able layer.

15 (original)

17. A toner cartridge assembly as in claim 16 wherein said adherent layer comprises an adhesive material.

20 (previously amended)

18. A toner cartridge assembly as in claim 16 wherein said adherent layer comprises a tape material wherein said tape material includes adhesive on two opposite surfaces.

25 (original)

19. A toner cartridge assembly as in claim 18 wherein said tape material includes a carrier in between two layers of glue or adhesive.

(original)

30 20. A toner cartridge assembly as in claim 16 wherein said adherent layer comprises a glue material.

(previously amended)

21. A toner cartridge assembly as in claim 16 wherein said kiss-cut release liner is cut with a precision cut that cuts fully through a release liner layer but not fully through said seal assembly.

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(previously amended)

22. A toner cartridge assembly as in claim 16 wherein said pull-strip comprises a strip of tear-able material which is unitary with said tear-able layer.

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(previously amended)

23. A toner cartridge assembly as in claim 16 wherein said pull-strip comprises a tear-guide.

(previously amended)

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24. A toner cartridge assembly as in claim 16 wherein a connecting region is formed in the vicinity where said pull-strip connects to said tear-able layer; and

wherein a first pre-cut and a second pre-cut are proximately located in said connecting region or adjacent said connecting region, said first and second pre-cuts determining a location of an initial tear of said tear-able layer in said main body portion.

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(previously amended)

25. A toner cartridge assembly as in claim 16

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wherein said first layer has a first surface and a second surface wherein said first surface of said first layer is adjacent said second surface of said adherent layer, and

wherein said kiss-cut release liner is a portion of a first release liner layer; and

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wherein said kiss-cut release liner covers said at least one masking region and the remainder of said first release liner layer is discarded so that said tear-able layer can adhere to said first surface of said adherent layer; and

wherein a tape layer has a first surface and a second surface, and

wherein said first surface of said tape layer is located on said second surface of said first layer

5 and a second release liner layer is attached to said

second surface of said tape layer to protect said tape layer prior to installing said seal assembly and ~~which~~ wherein said second release liner layer is removed prior to installing said seal assembly.

10 (previously amended)

26. A toner cartridge assembly as in claim 16 wherein said kiss-cut release liner includes a masking portion consisting of more than one discrete region on said kiss-cut release liner wherein each said discrete region on said kiss-cut release liner covers said at least one masking region.

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(previously amended)

27. A toner cartridge assembly as in claim 16

wherein said kiss-cut release liner is a portion of a first release liner; and

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wherein said kiss-cut release liner covers said at least one masking region and the remainder of said first release liner is discarded so that said tear-able layer can adhere to said first surface of said adherent layer; and

25 wherein said first release liner includes a non-masking portion consisting of more than one discrete region on said first release liner wherein each said discrete region on said first release liner covers said at least one non-masking portion and [[whereby]] wherein said non-masking portion of said first release liner is discarded prior to completion of assembly of said seal assembly of said toner cartridge.

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(previously amended)

28. A toner cartridge assembly as in claim 16 wherein said tear-able layer is conductive.

(previously amended))

29. A toner cartridge assembly as in claim 16 wherein said pull-strip is conductive.

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(previously amended)

30. An image forming apparatus;

wherein said image forming apparatus contains a toner storage container, a waste toner
hopper, a photoreceptor, a cleaning blade, a fuser section, a photoreceptor charging device
and a transfer section;

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wherein said toner storage container has a storage tank; and

wherein said storage tank includes a seal assembly; and

said seal assembly comprising:

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a main body portion, said main body portion including a first layer defining a first
opening,

an adherent layer including a second opening in register with said first opening of
said first layer, said adherent layer having a first surface and a second surface, said second
surface of said adherent layer is adjacent said first layer and said first surface of said
adherent layer further including at least one masking region, wherein said at least one
masking region is covered by a kiss-cut release liner; and

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a tear-able layer wherein said tear-able layer is adhered to said first surface of said
adherent layer except where said at least one masking region is covered by said kiss-cut
release liner, thereby said kiss-cut release liner is covered by said tear-able layer; and

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a pull-strip is connected to said tear-able layer.

(previously amended)

31. A method of forming a seal assembly for sealing a toner passage in a toner hopper
used in an image forming apparatus

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wherein the seal assembly includes an adherent layer which includes a first
adhesive surface and a second adhesive surface and a first release layer which is

removably adhered to the first adhesive surface of the adherent layer and a second release layer which is removably adhered to the second adhesive surface of the adherent layer to preserve the adhesive properties of the second adhesive surface of the adherent layer prior to installation of the seal assembly; and

5 wherein said method comprises the following steps;

 forming at least one kiss-cut in the first release layer to generate a masking portion and a removable non-masking portion and an open central region forming a full cut opening through at least the first release layer and the adherent layer,

 removing the open central region to unblock the opening through at least the first
10 release layer and the adherent layer,

 removing the removable non-masking portion of the first release layer to generate an exposed portion of the first adhesive surface of the adherent layer,

 placing a tearing layer over the exposed portion of the first adhesive surface of the adherent layer and over the masking portion of the release layer,

15 wherein the masking portion of the first release layer prevents a portion of the tearing layer from adhering to the adherent layer ;

 wherein there is a pull-strip attached to the seal assembly.

(original)

20 32. A method of forming a seal assembly for sealing a toner passage in a toner hopper used in an image forming apparatus comprising the steps of:

 providing a main body portion including a first layer defining a first opening, an adherent layer including a second opening in register with the first opening of the first layer, the adherent layer having a first surface and a second surface, the first surface of
25 adherent layer is adjacent the first layer and the second surface of the adherent layer is adjacent a release liner layer;

 forming at least one kiss-cut fully through the release liner layer, wherein the kiss-cut separates the release liner layer into at least one masking portion and at least one non-masking portion;

30 removing the non-masking portion of release liner layer to generate an exposed portion of the adherent layer thereby further providing a non-exposed portion of the adherent layer under the masking portion of the release liner layer;

 adhering a layer of tear-able material to the exposed portion of the adherent layer,

wherein a pull-strip is attached to the layer of tear-able material.

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(previously amended)

33. A method of forming a toner hopper used in an image forming apparatus;

wherein the toner hopper includes a reservoir and a feed roller compartment; and

wherein the reservoir is used to store powdered toner; and

10 wherein the feed roller compartment includes a roller used to dispense toner; and

wherein the toner hopper includes an attach surface that may be used to install a shipping seal assembly between the reservoir and the feed roller compartment to block toner prior to use of the toner hopper; and

15 wherein the shipping seal assembly includes an adherent layer which includes a first adhesive surface and a second adhesive surface and a first release layer which is removably adhered to the first adhesive surface of the adherent layer and a second release layer which is removably adhered to the second adhesive surface of the adherent layer to preserve the adhesive properties of the second adhesive surface of the adherent layer prior to installation of the shipping seal assembly; and

20 said method includes forming the shipping seal assembly including the following steps;

forming at least one kiss-cut in the first release layer to generate a masking portion and a removable non-masking portion; and

25 forming a full cut causing a separation between usable material and waste material to be discarded and thereby forming an opening through at least the first release layer and the adherent layer,

removing the waste material to unblock the opening through at least the first release layer and the adherent layer,

30 removing the removable non-masking portion of the first release layer to generate an exposed portion of the first adhesive surface of the adherent layer,

placing a tearing layer over the exposed portion of the first adhesive surface of the adherent layer and over the masking portion of the release layer,

wherein the masking portion of the first release layer prevents a portion of the tearing layer from adhering to the adherent layer ;

5 wherein there is a pull-strip attached to the shipping seal assembly; and

wherein said method includes the step of removing the second release layer and installing the shipping seal assembly on the attach surface of the toner hopper.

(previously amended)

10 34. A method of forming a toner hopper used in an image forming apparatus;

wherein the toner hopper includes a reservoir and a feed roller compartment; and

wherein the reservoir is used to store powdered toner; and

wherein the feed roller compartment includes a roller used to dispense toner; and

15 wherein the toner hopper includes a place to install a seal assembly between the reservoir and ~~said~~ the feed roller compartment;

said method includes forming the seal assembly including the following steps;

20 providing a main body portion including a first layer defining a first opening, an adherent layer including a second opening in register with the first opening of the first layer, the adherent layer having a first surface and a second surface, the first surface of adherent layer is adjacent the first layer and the second surface of the adherent layer is adjacent a release liner layer;

25 forming at least one kiss-cut fully through the release liner layer, wherein the kiss-cut separates the release liner layer into at least one masking portion and at least one non-masking portion;

removing the non-masking portion of release liner layer to generate an exposed portion of the adherent layer thereby further providing a non-exposed portion of the adherent layer under the masking portion of the release liner layer;

30 adhering a layer of tear-able material to the exposed portion of the adherent layer, wherein a pull-strip is attached to the layer of tear-able material.

(previously amended)

35. A method of forming a toner cartridge assembly used in an image forming apparatus;
wherein the toner cartridge assembly includes of a toner hopper and a waste toner
hopper; and

5 wherein the waste toner hopper includes of a photoreceptor, a cleaning blade, a charging
device for electrostatically charging the photoreceptor and a container to receive waste
toner; and

wherein the toner hopper includes a reservoir and a feed roller compartment; and

wherein the reservoir is used to store powdered toner; and

wherein the feed roller compartment has a roller used to dispense toner; and

10 wherein the toner hopper includes an attach surface that may be used to install a shipping
seal assembly for sealing the reservoir in the toner hopper to block toner prior to use of
the toner cartridge; and

15 wherein the shipping seal assembly includes an adherent layer which includes a
first adhesive surface and a second adhesive surface and a first release layer which is
removably adhered to the first adhesive surface of the adherent layer and a second release
layer which is removably adhered to the second adhesive surface of the adherent layer to
preserve the adhesive properties of the second adhesive surface of the adherent layer prior
to installation of the shipping seal assembly; and

20 wherein said method includes forming a shipping seal assembly comprising the following
steps;

forming at least one kiss-cut in the first release layer to generate a masking portion
and a removable non-masking portion; and

25 forming a full cut causing a separation between usable material and waste material
to be discarded and thereby forming an opening through at least the first release layer and
the adherent layer,

removing the waste material to unblock the opening through at least the first
release layer and the adherent layer,

30 removing the removable non-masking portion of the first release layer to generate
an exposed portion of the first adhesive surface of the adherent layer,

placing a tearing layer over the exposed portion of the first adhesive surface of the

adherent layer and over the masking portion of the release layer,

wherein the masking portion of the first release layer prevents a portion of the tearing layer from adhering to the adherent layer ;

wherein there is a pull-strip attached to the shipping seal assembly; and

5 wherein said method includes the step of removing the second release layer and installing the shipping seal assembly on the attach surface on the reservoir of the toner hopper.

(previously amended)

10 36. A method of forming a toner cartridge assembly used in an image forming apparatus; wherein the toner cartridge assembly includes of a toner hopper and a waste toner hopper; and

wherein the waste toner hopper includes of a photoreceptor, a cleaning blade, a charging device for electrostatically charging the photoreceptor and a container to receive waste toner; and

15 wherein the toner hopper includes a reservoir and a feed roller compartment; and

wherein the reservoir is used to store powdered toner; and

wherein the feed roller compartment has a roller used to dispense toner; and

wherein the toner hopper includes a place to install a seal assembly

20 for sealing the reservoir in the toner hopper; and

wherein said method includes forming the assembly including the following steps;

25 providing a main body portion including a first layer defining a first opening, an adherent layer including a second opening in register with the first opening of the first layer, the adherent layer having a first surface and a second surface, the first surface of adherent layer is adjacent the first layer and the second surface of the adherent layer is adjacent a release liner layer;

30 forming at least one kiss-cut fully through the release liner layer, wherein the kiss-cut separates the release liner layer into at least one masking portion and at least one non-masking portion;

removing the non-masking portion of release liner layer to generate an exposed portion of the adherent layer thereby further providing a non-exposed portion of the

adherent layer under the masking portion of the release liner layer;

adhering a layer of tear-able material to the exposed portion of the adherent layer, wherein a pull-strip is attached to the layer of tear-able material.

5 (previously amended)

37. A method of forming an image forming apparatus;

wherein the image forming apparatus contains a toner storage container, a waste toner hopper, a photoreceptor, a cleaning blade, a fuser section, a photoreceptor charging device and a transfer section;

10 wherein the toner storage container has a storage tank; and

wherein the storage tank includes an attach surface that may be used to install a shipping seal assembly for sealing a toner passage in the storage container compartment to block toner prior to use of the storage tank; and

15 wherein the shipping seal assembly includes an adherent layer which includes a first adhesive surface and a second adhesive surface and a first release layer which is removably adhered to the first adhesive surface of the adherent layer and a second release layer which is removably adhered to the second adhesive surface of the adherent layer to preserve the adhesive properties of the second adhesive surface of the adherent layer prior to installation of the shipping seal assembly; and

20 wherein said method includes forming the shipping seal assembly including the following steps;

forming at least one kiss-cut in the first release layer to generate a masking portion and a removable non-masking portion; and

25 forming a full cut causing a separation between usable material and waste material to be discarded and thereby forming an opening through at least the first release layer and the adherent layer,

removing the waste material to unblock the opening through at least the first release layer and the adherent layer,

30 removing the removable non-masking portion of the first release layer to generate an exposed portion of the first adhesive surface of the adherent layer,

placing a tearing layer over the exposed portion of the first adhesive surface of the adherent layer and over the masking portion of the release layer,

wherein the masking portion of the first release layer prevents a portion of the tearing layer from adhering to the adherent layer ;

wherein there is a pull-strip attached to the shipping seal assembly; and

wherein said method includes the step of removing the second release layer and installing the shipping seal assembly on the attach surface in the storage tank.

(previously amended)

38. A method of forming an image forming apparatus;

wherein the image forming apparatus contains a toner storage container, a waste toner hopper, a photoreceptor, a cleaning blade, a fuser section, a photoreceptor charging device and a transfer section;

wherein the toner storage container has a storage tank; and

wherein the storage tank includes a place to install a seal assembly for sealing a toner passage in the storage container; and

wherein said method includes forming the seal assembly including the following steps;

providing a main body portion including a first layer defining a first opening, an adherent layer including a second opening in register with the first opening of the first layer, the adherent layer having a first surface and a second surface, the first surface of adherent layer is adjacent the first layer and the second surface of the adherent layer is adjacent a release liner layer;

forming at least one kiss-cut fully through the release liner layer, wherein the kiss-cut separates the release liner layer into at least one masking portion and at least one non-masking portion;

removing the non-masking portion of release liner layer to generate an exposed portion of the adherent layer thereby further providing a non-exposed portion of the adherent layer under the masking portion of the release liner layer;

adhering a layer of tear-able material to the exposed portion of the adherent layer, wherein a pull-strip is attached to the layer of tear-able material.